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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 003051

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PHUM PGOV PREL KOLY CH
SUBJECT: OLYMPICS: MANY MIGRANTS AND MINORITIES LEAVE
BEIJING DURING THE GAMES

Classified By: Classified by PolMinCouns Aubrey Carlson
for reasons 1.4 b,d.

Summary

¶1. (C) The closing of construction sites and factories in and around Beijing has forced many of Beijing's migrant workers to return home during the Olympics. The loss of income caused by the Olympics-related workplace shutdown has caused anger and frustration. In some cases, authorities have reportedly ordered migrants to leave Beijing. For example, one contact told us that the authorities ordered migrant trash collectors to leave the city. There is also evidence of an unevenly implemented campaign to reduce the city's Tibetan and Uighur populations during the Olympics. End summary.

Lack of Work Causing Migrants to Leave

¶2. (C) Wei Wei (protect), the founder of Little Bird, an NGO that provides legal assistance to migrant workers, told PolOff July 29 he had not heard of coercive measures being used by security forces to expel migrants from Beijing, but the shutdown of construction sites and factories is giving many migrants little choice but to leave the capital during the Games. Wei said migrants in service industries, such as restaurants and retail stores, have not been significantly impacted. A teacher at Bai Nian Vocational School, a politically well-connected charity with a student body of 150-160 teenage children of migrant workers, said all of the students are still in Beijing as Olympics Volunteers. Li Qiang (protect), Dean of Tsinghua University School of Humanities and Social Sciences, told PolOff July 29 "Migrants cannot get tickets to the events, and there is no work for them in the Beijing, so they feel they might as well go home and watch the Games on TV." PolOff spoke with three migrants from Shandong Province August 5 who said they were leaving Beijing, at least temporarily, because of the lack of jobs. The three said the involuntary "vacation" would give them a chance to visit relatives.

"Migrants Have No Role in the Olympics"

¶3. (C) Wei Wei criticized authorities for shunting aside the very migrants who built the Olympic venues, saying no effort has been made to include them in the Games. Wei said he suggested to the Beijing Municipal Government that 100 tickets to key events be reserved for migrants as a symbolic thank you to the tens of thousands involved in the preparation efforts. The proposal went nowhere, Wei lamented, even though it

would have helped deflect international criticism of China for poor treatment of migrants.

Certain Migrants Targeted in Beautification Campaigns

¶ 14. (C) Some contacts report that authorities have engaged in targeted actions against migrants in "unsightly" occupations. Wang Chong (protect), an international affairs columnist for the China Youth Daily, told PolOff that government authorities have ordered migrant trash collectors (who pick through trash for recyclable materials) to leave the city. Other contacts report that open air vegetable and fruit stands, which employ mostly migrants, have shut down as part of the effort to beautify the city. Contacts also report that some migrants who lack formal employment (e.g., those who work as domestic servants) are having more difficulty than usual obtaining temporary residence permits. Wei said the loss of income due to Olympics-related restrictions is causing considerable anger among the migrant population.

Discrimination against Tibetans

¶ 15. (C) Beijing residents we spoke with generally confirmed press reports that Tibetans and Uighurs are encountering discrimination and pressure to leave the capital. An American cultural anthropologist (protect) who is a visiting scholar at Central

BEIJING 00003051 002 OF 002

University for Nationalities (CUN) told PolOff August 1 that University officials were strongly encouraging Tibetan and Uighur students to return home during the Games. At Beijing railway stations, he said, Tibetans and Uighurs seeking to depart the capital are finding it easy to get tickets, even for trains that are listed as sold out. He reported that the CUN campus is largely quiet because most students are on summer break, but school leaders are still on guard against possible disturbances. (Note: PolOff observed security guards checking the IDs of everyone entering the CUN campus.) Furthermore, our contact said school administrators, in the context of discussing Olympic security, told him that his office was "too Tibetan" and that he should put up decorations reflecting the cultures of other minorities. CUN officials urged him to "not publish" articles on Tibet during the Games.

"Government Wants Uighurs Out"

¶ 16. (C) Zhou Qing'an, an editorial writer for The Beijing News (Xin Jing Bao) and Director of the Public Diplomacy Research Program at Tsinghua University, said even ethnic Han Chinese residents of the Tibet Autonomous Region and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region are encountering discrimination. Zhou told PolOff August 5 that a family friend, who is Han, was recently turned away at a Beijing hotel after showing the clerk her Xinjiang-issued identification card. A China Academy of Social Sciences scholar told PolOff August 7 that an ethnic Han colleague of his "who looks Uighur" has attracted special attention on the subway from security types who have examined his briefcase especially closely and followed him during his commute. PolOff spoke to several Muslim residents of Beijing August 5 who confirmed that many Uighurs have left the capital. The owner of one restaurant (a Hui Muslim from Qinghai Province) said "the Government wants (Uighurs) out," he said. Another Hui restaurateur told PolOff that his single Uighur waiter went home "because of the Olympics." The pressure on

Uighurs to leave is apparently unevenly applied. The Uighur proprietor of a restaurant near the Embassy said he had no plans to return to his hometown of Kashi (Kashgar) during the Games. The restaurant, which employees mostly Uighur workers, appeared fully staffed.

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